

## **Letter of Transmittal**

February 19, 2004

Educational Testing Service  
TOEFL Grants and Awards Program, MS 52-N  
Test of English as a Foreign Language  
P.O. Box 6155  
Princeton, NJ 08541-6155

To the TOEFL Grants and Awards Committee:

I submit for your consideration the application for the Library and Resource Center Award.  
Find enclosed all the documents required as specified for the award.

I am submitting this on behalf of the Martin Luther King, Jr. American Corner, Veliko Turnovo in Bulgaria. The Corner is a free-standing library/resource center located at the Sts. Cyril and Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Nina Chang  
English Language Fellow,  
U.S. State Department Sponsored Program  
English Department of Sts. Cyril & Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo

## **Cover Sheet**

### **Name of Requesting Organization:**

Martin Luther King, Jr. American Corner, Veliko Turnovo

### **Address:**

Sts. Cyril & Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo  
Teodossi Turnovski 2  
Veliko Turnovo 5003  
Rectorate Building  
West Wing, Room 410

### **Telephone:**

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### **Contact Person:**

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U.S. State Department Sponsored Program  
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## **Narrative of Application**

### **How the New Materials will Enhance the Library and Increase Services**

The American Corner is an American style of library established to provide useful information about the United States, including cultural, political, and educational opportunities. The Corner was established in February of 2003 in partnership with the Public Affairs Office of the Embassy of the United States of America in Sofia with the primary purpose of promoting mutual understanding between the United States and Bulgaria. As of now, the American Corner in Veliko Turnovo is the only one of its kind in Bulgaria with plans to expand in other metropolitan cities.

Currently, the Corner has approximately 1000 print materials, 140 video cassettes, and a variety of journals and magazines. The staff at the Corner is working on developing its current collection to better serve the needs of the user community. The Corner started with the aim of developing its collection on American Studies. However, it has seen a great need to develop the English Language Teaching (ELT) collection, including materials on teaching methodology, principles and theory on language teaching, and test preparation for TOEFL exams. This is in light of the fact that English is becoming increasingly important in the Bulgarian education system and growing number of students are expressing interest in studying in the States which most often requires that they take the TOEFL. Currently, the Corner has 3 copies of TOEFL related books which are rarely on the shelf because they are always checked out.

The great need for ELT/EFL and TOEFL materials at the Corner has largely to do with its location. The Corner is located on the university campus and while the Corner is open to the public, it is most frequented by the university community including students, lecturers, and alumni who are in one way or another interested in learning, improving, and refining their English. Of the 500 registered members of the American Corner, 377 are university students,

50 are high-school students, 40 are university faculty, staff, and alumni, and 33 are English language teachers. There is a small number of members consisting of the general public.

The University of Veliko Turnovo is the second oldest and one of the most prestigious university in Bulgaria with an enrollment of approximately 10,000 students. It is especially known for its topnotch Modern Languages Faculty and students in the foreign language departments are highly bright, capable, and motivated. Majority of the students go on to graduate studies and many of the graduates are excellent candidates for studying abroad.

Another important factor of the location is that Veliko Turnovo is located in Central Bulgaria which makes it easily accessible from all parts of the country. If the grant is awarded, the Corner will be sought out by many in neighboring regions for its resources. Even now, many alumni of the university return to the Corner and the British Council Library (the other English resource library at the university) to check out books and get information. This partly has to do with many of the English majors becoming English teachers in schools in neighboring cities and town. The need to acquire more books on language teaching is becoming even more apparent as many of the teachers come to the Corner looking for and specifically requesting for materials on teaching methodology and ideas. Currently, the American Corner has about 40 titles which deal with language teaching published within the last 7 years. We are seeking to develop a collection which is up-to-date and innovative for English language teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Corner is also being utilized as a center for English Teachers Training workshops in the region. Since the Corner was set up in February of 2003, there have been several workshops and lectures, some of which were specifically for local English teachers and students. For this coming April, there will be a workshop conducted in collaboration with other English teachers from the Peace Corps aimed at training local middle and high school English teachers. I have great hopes that the American Corner can be used as a resource

center for these local teachers to return to for use of ELT/EFL books, videos, and other educational materials. The Corner can potentially become a breeding ground for English language teacher training, thanks in part to the university facility, strategic location, and the ever-growing availability of resources on English language teaching. It is also worth noting that with approximately 70 Peace Corps English Teachers throughout Bulgaria, English is something that is of great interest and importance to many Bulgarians.

The university also boasts of having a Fulbright Information Center open to the university community for advising on opportunities on studying abroad. The Center offers practical information on many of the ETS produced exams like SAT, GRE, and TOEFL. The Center is visited by not only students from the university but students from neighboring regions. Interested students include university students and faculty who wish to pursue graduate/post-graduate studies and high school students interested in doing their undergraduate studies in the States. Both groups are required to take the TOEFL exams in order to apply for any of the programs and hence the demand for TOEFL preparation materials. Please note that the reason I am not submitting this application on behalf of the Fulbright Information Center is that it is primarily an advising center with limited office hours. However, the Fulbright Center works in close cooperation with the American Corner as they are both affiliated with the U.S. Educational Bureau. In previous year, the Center provided TOEFL preparation classes which had to be discontinued due to lack of funding and materials. However, if the grant is awarded, we have hopes of initiating talks to reintroduce the program.

Bulgaria is a developing country with an average salary of about \$150 a month. For the average Bulgarian, being able to buy books, especially specialized books like TOEFL and EFL/ELT books is a luxury. Not only are books expensive but many of the books sold in local bookstores are outdated or superceded and may not be as relevant as the more recent editions. It is very difficult for students to purchase and attain quality study materials to improve their

English studies and adequately prepare for exams. In response to the overall scarcity of resources, the American Corner is doing its best to provide the best service it possibly can. If the American Corner were to receive this grant, it would do its utmost to ensure that all information seekers regardless of age, position, race, or gender have open and free access to high-quality materials for their information needs and academic pursuits. I believe the American Corner would be doing a great service to ETS/TOEFL as well by ensuring that its future test-takers are well-prepared to take their exams and pursue their educational goals of studying in the United States.

### **Location and Hours of Operation**

The American Corner is located on the third floor in the main building of the university campus. It is centrally located for easy access and visibility. The university campus itself is conveniently located near the center of town with easy public transportation access. The hours of operation are: Monday through Friday 9:30-4:00 and Friday 9:30-12:00.

### **Description of the Users**

As the American Corner is located on campus, most of the users are university students. Majority of these students are English or other foreign language majors. This has largely to do with the fact that the professors and lecturers in the English Department use the resources available at the American Corner for their classes. As mentioned, since books and other education materials are hard to attain, the American Corner is able to provide services like books on reserve for classes. However, the profiles of the members are becoming more diverse as the Corner is becoming more known in and outside the university community. The Corner is active in conducting activities and workshops for the community at large and thus its membership is continually growing.

## **How the Current Collection is Accessed**

The American Corner is open to the public for access to all of its collection available on site. Except for the reference books (which are clearly marked) and books on reserve, all materials can be checked out. The loan period for all materials including books, videocassettes, journals, and magazines is two weeks. All items can be renewed 2 more times over the phone or in person unless there is a hold on the item. Free computer and/or internet access is also available for a maximum of one hour per user/per day. The Corner has two computers with internet accessibility.

## Letter from the Director of the Library

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Maria Karapencheva, the Librarian and Supervisor of the American Corner. I am a qualified librarian with more than 15 years experience in running foreign language libraries.

In regards to the Library Award, I am writing to assure you that our library will be well-equipped to receive the materials. The American Corner library is situated at the building of the University of Veliko Turnovo Sts. Cyril and Methodius. It has enough space to accommodate this very useful addition to our collection.

The American Corner is an open access library. Membership is open to the general public. This includes university and high school students, members of the academic staff of the university, teachers of English at the area schools, including the Higher Military Academy, and external members.

The materials should be shipped to the following mailing address:

Maria Karapencheva, Librarian  
American Corner  
University of Veliko Turnovo Sts. Cyril and Methodius  
No. 2 "Teodosii Turnovski" Str.  
5003 Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria

Yours sincerely,

Maria Karapencheva  
American Corner  
University of Veliko Turnovo "St. Cyril and St. Methodius"  
5003 Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria  
Phone (359) (62) 618 337  
Fax (359) (62) 618 337  
E-mail: [maria.karapencheva@uni-vt.bg](mailto:maria.karapencheva@uni-vt.bg)



## **Other Informational Materials about the Library/Resource Center**

Please check the American Corner's website at:

<http://www.geocities.com/americancornervt/>

Also find attached an informative brochure on the "Faculty of Modern Language" at the Sts. Cyril & Methodius University of Veliko Turnovo.

## **Awards Application Contact Information Form**

### **Name of Grant/Award:**

Library and Resource Center Grant

### **Applicant Information:**

#### **Name(s):**

Nina Chang on behalf of the Martin Luther King, Jr. American Corner, Veliko Turnovo

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N/A

#### **Date of submission:**

February 18, 2004